CATHEDRAL OF SPIRE.

HAD imperial Rome left no other mark to record amongst the nations her almost universal sway, the history of architecture would testify to the extended influence of a people endowed with noble feelings and high powers. With the decay of the Roman Empire declined the arts it had fostered. Architecture, true to its trust as the parent art, yet lingers on the stage when the excellence of painting and sculpture has ceased, and then passing in silence through ages of darkness and barbarism again appears to herald their return, and prepare for their reception; when a more universal, a more gentle sway than that of Rome, whose power was in the hearts of men, and not in outward coercion, came to be extensively acknowledged. Yet, after centuries of desolation, the impression of the Roman mind is strong on the works of their successors. Like bulwarks of their new faith, some of the earliest and noblest efforts of the parent art arise, beneath this new influence, on the confines of the fallen empire, and from these strongholds, as from fountains, the influence of the new dominion is poured out to lands untouched by Roman prowess.

The numerous specimens of this stage of the art, which on the continent have been preserved to our own day, cannot fail to inspire us with veneration for the talent which designed, and the energy which executed such vast and imposing works, amidst the turbulence and ferocity of a semi-barbarous population. Of this class, the cathedrals of Mayence, Worms, and Spire are fine examples. The dates of their erection seem to be in succession from A.D. 900 to A.D. 1050, their succession in date corresponding with their position at nearly equal distances apart on the right bank of the Rhine, ascending from Mayence. Following this rule, Mayence, as the first in date, and the first in position, has been most affected by the operation of the succeeding styles. The plan is nearly the same in each instance,—a long nave with aisles, short transept, and an apse at both the east and west ends. The exterior compact and solid in appearance, yet varied in outline by numerous towers of simple form. The interior plain and severe, but massive and solemn. The details strikingly classic in form. The whole grand and imposing to a degree, not surpassed by the bolder imagination and more subtle beauties developed in the productions of later ages.

The erection of Spire Cathedral, which is here illustrated, is attributed to the Emperor Conrad II., called the Salic, who resided at this city. He commenced his reign A.D. 1024, and the building was not completed till the close of that century, during the reign of his grandson Henry IV., who shortly after lost his throne by the arms of his rebellious son and successor Henry V. The city at this time seems to have been of great importance, and the residence successively of several emperors. It was here (A.D. 1146) that St. Bernard, abbot of Clervaux, by his eloquence engaged Conrad III., with many nobles, to proceed with Louis VII. of France, on the second crusade. In 1246, the Bishop of Spire, with five other ecclesiastics, were sufficiently powerful to defy the vengeance of Frederic II., an energetic prince, by crowning, in obedience to the commands of the Pope, a rival candidate for the imperial title. Ten years later the city associated itself with Frankfort and others, for the extermination of the robber nobles who impeded the freedom of traffic on the Rhine. In 1390 it was the scene of a disgraceful massacre and pillaging of the Jews (who in a great measure conducted the trade of the city) to procure money to satisfy the demands of the papacy, then shared by two rival Popes. Until 1688 the Cathedral appears to have escaped wilful injury; but in that year it was partially destroyed by the troops of Louis XIV. of France. It was again devastated by the French revolutionary forces at the end of the last century. By these two misfortunes it was deprived of the most interesting of its ancient monuments. The crypt beneath the choir is said to contain the remains of the founder, Conrad II., and eight other emperors, including the famous Rodolph of Hapsburg, the founder of the House of Austria (who died at Germersheim, distant about 3 leagues from Spire), and Adolphus of Nassau, who followed in the empire, and was killed in battle near the city by the sword of his successor Albert I., who in his turn (A.D. 1308) fell by the hand of an assassin, his own nephew, and here lies quietly by the side of his rival. G. M. H.

LABOURERS' COTTAGES.

MR. WILLIAM CHEFFINS, surveyor, has published in lithograph, plans, elevation, description, &c. of a pair of cottages, estimated to be erected in the neighbourhood of London for 180*l.*, or "on an estate which can furnish stone or brick, and tile, and fir, elm or poplar timber, not exceeding 150*l.*" The design affords, to each cottage, seven apartments, with the various appropriate conveniences, having separate bed-rooms for the parents, boys, and girls, and is well calculated to promote the physical and moral health of the occupants. The author's views are well set forth in the description: the following extracts contain some proper suggestions:—

"In some situations, a brick oven should be built in the outhouse, for the joint use of the cottages; and, if rightly placed, one of very moderate size will be sufficient for six or even twelve (?) families.

In the country, the supply of water principally depends on springs and ponds, which, besides being very precarious, often entails much labour upon the wife and children, and encourages a disinclination to fetch more than is absolutely necessary. If water can be found within a depth of 30 feet, a well and pump for two or more cottages is not an expensive concern.

For each (in a district where the lower estimate would apply) a rent of 1s. 6d. per week will be gladly paid, and a return of 5*l.* per cent. realized on the cost, including a good rent for the 30 or 40 perches of land allotted to each. In and near towns, 3s. or 3s. 6d, per week will be readily obtained, even without a garden, and a very remunerative return secured for the capital invested."

INTEREST OF PRINCE ALBERT IN CONSTRUCTIVE AND MECHANICAL SCIENCE.

HIS Royal Highness recently sent a donation of 20*l.* to the Slough Mechanics' Institute in a letter, by Col. Phipps, addressed to Mr. Labouchere, who had presided at the anniversary dinner, and who now appears to take an interest in the success of the institute. In this letter a characteristic instance of the good sense and discrimination with which such donations are either given or withheld is incidentally given. "A short time since," says Col. Phipps, "an application was made to his Royal Highness for a subscription towards the funds of this institution; but, as the principal grounds on which that application was based were its former mismanagement, and its failure to carry out successfully any of its original objects, his Royal Highness did not consider that an increase of funds would be sufficient to insure an improved and more successful management in future. Your presidency at the meeting, however—the interest which you have expressed in it, and the tone of the speeches generally upon that occasion—do, in his Royal Highness's opinion, give the guarantee which was alone necessary to enable H. R. H. to gratify his inclination of assisting an institution capable of doing so much good in the immediate neighbourhood of the residence of her Majesty and himself."—— The Prince has been elected an honorary member of the Berlin Building Society, of which the Prince of Prussia is the patron. In a letter acknowledging the honour and thanking the society, Prince Albert says "I shall consider myself fortunate in being named a member of a society that has been so successfully active on a field that on this side the channel has also been cultivated with much activity, for the advantage of the working classes, and for which I have for several years felt a special sympathy. If I can be of any use to your Royal Highness by communicating the results of the experience here made for the benefit of your society I shall be most ready to do so, as well as to send specimens of building materials, or anything of the same kind that may be of service to the society." It would be interesting to know something about the principles and rules on which this Prussian Building Society is conducted. We hope it steers clear of the defects and evils of many of those, in this country, the operations of which have rather checked than promoted the benefits which such societies are highly capable of conferring on the working classes. The Prince Consort's special interest in all matters connected with building and constructive science generally was long since manifested in his spontaneous adoption of our Journal, which is regularly sent him at his special request. To this circumstance we can, we trust, without impropriety, advert on such an occasion as the present, although we have felt a delicacy in making a parade of the Prince's name from interested motives, as many in such circumstances might have conceived themselves authorised to do.

IRON FOR FIRE-PROOF CONSTRUCTION.

I ALWAYS feel thankful when THE BUILDER adverts to safety from fire in the construction of dwelling-houses: we hear people deploring the frequent occurrence of conflagrations, causing loss of life and property, but they do not seem to reflect that each room in every house is a wooden box, so that, in reality, the wonder is that there should be so few such disasters. When a house has been thus destroyed, the new one is again raised on the same wooden plan.

Let the brains be puzzled to eternity, no scheme will be devised to render buildings thoroughly safe, except excluding combustible materials from their formation; that is, metal must be substituted for wood, and that metal must be iron. Let a handsome prize be offered, open to all the world, for the best essay "*On the most advantageous mode of applying iron to render edifices completely fire-proof.*" In the present depressed state of the trade, it would not be ill-timed if the iron-masters of the kingdom were to subscribe for such an object, thus combining attention to their own interests with benevolence towards their species. And a novel benefit would result from such a mode of building, namely, the equable heating of each apartment. Many a stately pile has been converted into cinders by the unskilful direction of flues, or by overheating them; but in a fire-proof house they may be entrusted with impunity to the superintendence of the most dull. Were such buildings once to become the fashion, the world would be astonished how it could have remained so long in the wood. W.

METROPOLITAN.—In the report of the Commissioners of Woods and Forests lately issued, an account is given of the following sums expended:—On public buildings and palaces, 98,711*l.* 16s.; Ordnance Office, Pall Mall, 7,000*l.* 2s. 2d.; Buckingham Palace improvements, 5,175*l.* 19s. 7d.; ditto, the inclosure, &c., 5,649*l.* 18s. 6d.; new Houses of Parliament, 113,825*l.* 2s. 6d.; British Museum buildings, 25,096*l.* 14s. 7d.; Nelson monument, 1,326*l.* 1s. 10d.; metropolitan improvements, 22,626*l.* 16s. 2d.; ditto the new street from the docks to Shoreditch, 56,432*l.*; Battersea Park, 22,505*l.* 14s. 7d.; Menai and Conway Bridges, 2,810*l.* 18s. 3d.; Windsor town improvements, 21,781*l.* 9s. 9d.; and New Forest drainage, 1,118*l.* 2s. 2d.——The scaffolding for the commencement of the new ball-room at Buckingham Palace began the other day to show itself above the high hoarding surrounding the works.——The extensive new buildings at Guy's Hospital are progressing towards completion, covering an immense piece of ground at the rear of the old building. ——The building which held the late Chinese Exhibition at Albert Gate, Knightsbridge, has been cleared away. It is said, if Knightsbridge barracks be removed, the whole row of irregular houses here will follow, and a line of mansions, with park frontages, will immediately be commenced.